

IN THE DRAWINGS

Please amend Fig. 2 as indicated on the enclosed copy thereof. Fig. 2 has been amended to include the legend "Prior Art."

REMARKS

I. Introduction

In response to the Office Action dated March 7, 2005, Applicants have amended Fig. 2 in the manner suggested by the Examiner to include the legend "Prior Art."

For the reasons set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are patentable over the cited prior art references.

II. The Rejection Of Claims 1-9 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over USP No. 6,448,868 to Kato. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection for at least the following reasons.

Applicants have enclosed a certified translation of the Japanese priority document (Japanese patent application No. 2000-237029) to perfect the claim of priority. Applicants respectfully submit that the pending application, entitled to a priority date of August 4, 2000, precedes the effective filing date of Kato. Accordingly, Kato does not qualify as prior art relative to the subject application.

More specifically, USP No. 6,448,868 to Kato, issued on September 10, 2002, has a U.S. filing date of January 17, 2001. The earliest date under which Kato could be considered prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is January 17, 2001. Because the present application has a filing date of August 2, 2001 and a priority date of August 4, 2000, Kato is not prior art to the instant application.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the pending rejections be withdrawn.

III. Conclusion

Accordingly, it is urged that the application is in condition for allowance, an indication of which is respectfully solicited.

If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is requested to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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